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You can't cut a budget you don't have

By John D. Lofton

WASHINGTON—It is being said by some that President-elect Carter is backing down on his campaign promise to slash the defense budget by anywhere from \$5 billion to \$7 billion yearly.

Those who are saying this are correct. When Carter's defense secretary-designate, Dr. Harold Brown, says that Carter never meant to indicate that \$5 billion to \$7 billion would be cut from the present Pentagon budget, he's shovelling smoke.

On June 16 of last year, candidate Carter told the Democratic Platform Committee: "Without endangering the defense of our Nation or our commitments to our allies, we can reduce present defense expenditures by about \$5 to 7 billion annually."

But, I for one, am glad the President-elect has begun to waffle on this issue. To be sure, Carter is still keeping a stiff upper lip, saying things like we are militarily "far stronger" than the Russians by most measures. But surely, with each additional classified intelligence briefing, he must realize things are not nearly so rosy.

Consider the numbers.

According to the highly respected, London-based Institute for Strategic Studies, U. S. defense spending is about \$100.1 billion whereas Soviet spending is anywhere from \$105 billion to \$135 billion annually. Other

categories compare as follows: total men under arms, USSR, 3,650,000, the U. S., 2,086,700; combat divisions, USSR, 168, the U. S., 19, including the Marines; tanks, USSR, 41,500, the U. S., 1,280.

The Soviets have 214 major combat surface ships, we have 176; the Russians have 231 attack submarines; we have 75. In the strategic force category, the Russians outnumber us both in ICBMs and sub-launched missiles. On the other hand, we have 453 long-range bombers, the Soviets have 135, but these are supplemented

by 650 medium-range bombers.

In addition to these raw numbers, there is also the overall question of what the Russians are trying to do with all this hardware — what outgoing CIA Director George Bush calls the "worrisome signs" that the Soviet Union's basic goal is not rough equality with the U. S. military forces, but strategic superiority.

Prior to this current national estimate of Soviet aims, it had been the view that the objective of the Russians was rough parity with U.S. strategic capabilities.

But this old view has been changed thanks in large part to pressure from a group of outside Soviet experts who have strongly taken issue with official government intelligence estimates.

After three months of studying all the evidence available to governmental intelligence experts, this group, headed by Richard Pipes, professor of Russian history at Harvard, has accused the CIA of understating for years the extent and nature of the Soviet threat.

One member of the Pipes group

says of their clash with the CIA: "Sometimes, we left them speechless. We had men of great prestige, some of them with memories going back 25 years or more, and they made devastating critiques of the agency estimates."

Other sources reflecting the Pipes group's findings say: "Whenever Nikita Khrushchev used to say, 'We need peaceful coexistence,' and in the next breath, 'We will bury you,' the CIA tended to say the first comment was policy, the second polemic."

Carter most likely is already familiar with the Pipes report because his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brezinski, has already been briefed on its findings by Maj. Gen. George Keegan Jr., head of Air Force Intelligence.

Keegan is one of the few government intelligence experts who has for years believed that CIA estimates of Soviet intentions were based on faulty assumptions and faulty analysis.

In shifting his ground on the need to cut the defense budget by several billion dollars this year, President-elect Carter's personal credibility on this issue has been weakened. But the country's military credibility will be strengthened. And this is what really matters.